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ABSTRACT

This document consists of two paired articles: the first, "Preparing Faculty Out of Class Experiences," by Mel Klein, and the second, "Help Advisers Be More Than Ghost Signatures," by Jeffrey B. Calfaude. Each article shares insights on how faculty advisers "bridge the gap" between students and faculty. When faculty members are asked to advise student organizations for the first time, student union professionals should meet with them to communicate that faculty roles are active and dynamic and their responsibilities are complex. Student groups expect advisers to become major problem solvers, mediators, guides, critics, and resources. Good advisers dedicate a portion of personal time to the organization, becoming part of its structure, dealing with membership diversity and representing organizational continuity. Prospective advisers should also be told of the personal satisfactions of the job, both in watching and helping students mature and in the appreciation of current and former students. To be knowledgeable, well-prepared, and effective advisers, faculty members must be provided information and guidance to enhance the potential for productive, successful, and enjoyable adviser/student relationships. (10 references) (MSE)

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On one side sit the students. On the other, sit the faculty. In between, student activities directors offer a neutral cocurricular setting that encourages students and faculty to interact without threat of academic or social humiliation. In fact, union professionals actively attempt to link academic and student affairs by recruiting faculty advisors. Mel Klein and Jeffrey B. Cufaude share their insight in these paired articles. Together, they suggest how faculty advisers

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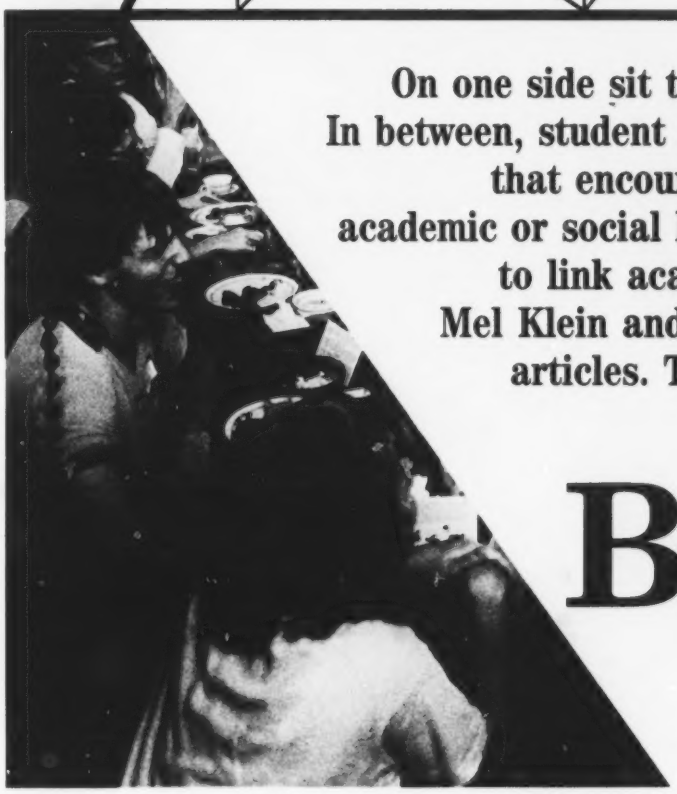

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Bridge

Preparing faculty for out-of-class experiences

Mel Klein

The telephone rings. An apprehensive professor reveals the latest crisis: "I've been asked to serve as an adviser to a student organization. What do I need to know?"

It's a simple, almost innocuous, question. But it deserves more than a cursory reply. Student activities and union programmers owe the faculty an informed, articulate response.

Faculty members asked to advise student organizations for the first time have experience in a classroom, not a cocurricular setting, particularly one as structured as a student organization. Union professionals therefore should meet with prospective advisers; face-to-face, they can communicate that the adviser's roles are dynamic and not isolated, that the re-

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Photo by Cynthia DeGrand, IU News Bureau

sponsibilities are far more complex than passively attending a weekly, biweekly, or monthly meeting.

A student organization functions within a structured framework containing members-at-large, elected or appointed executive officers, and an adviser. No one acts alone. Prospective advisers must understand they are integral to the organizational structure.

The adviser answers to the membership, the executive officers, and colleagues outside the organization's formal construct. The effective adviser is active but not dominant. In fact, the adviser, who has privileged status within the institutional setting, may have the most significant impact on behalf of the organization while outside the group structure.

Roles

All organizations, regardless how successful, experience problems. Student groups expect advisers to become major, if not primary, **problem solvers.** Students may expect advisers to solve problems quickly. Advisers seem to possess the special knack, the experienced insight, and the keys to addressing complex dilemmas. but as we all know, advisers have not cornered these "special" skills or powers. They sometimes muddle through difficult situations like anyone else.

Advisers, like it or not, become **mediators.** Differences will surface between individual members or between factions. Advisers, perceived as fair and neutral, must step in and help identify a middle ground or a solution all

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parties may not endorse but can tolerate.

Advisers are **guides.** As unbiased purveyors of alternatives, options, and choices, they keep the group "on task."

When students ask, "How are we doing? How can we get better?" advisers as **critics** must remember to commend success and effort as well as point out shortcomings and weaknesses.

Advisers as **resources** link the organization with campus and off-campus communities. Advisers open the doors of colleagues and acquaintances the organization hopes to use as programming resources. Advisers help the group cut institutional red tape when planning programs and activities. Advisers can make it easier for the group to address its purposes, achieve its goals, and resolve insurmountable problems.

Responsibilities

Good advisers dedicate a portion of their personal time to the organization. Advisers should try to attend regularly scheduled meetings even though student groups do not always meet at times or in locations convenient for faculty.

Effective advisers do not function in isolation. They become part of the organization's structure, interacting with the executive officers, the membership, individuals who seek guidance, committees planning a major program or event, and others not associated with the organization.

Advisers must deal with membership diversity. They rarely interact with memberships exclusively composed of the traditional 17- to 21-year-old student cohort. Today's students, in various stages of adulthood with diverse educational and experiential backgrounds, challenge each other and the adviser. They will push. They will question. They will prod. They will probe. Advising is not for the thin-skinned.

Advisers represent organizational continuity. They become the organizational constant, the glue that links the years, the historian. Advisers help the organization save time which otherwise is wasted in annually reinventing the wheel.

Rewards

Prospective advisers need to be told the personal satisfaction that results from advising. Advisers feel good because they help. They watch younger adults mature. They see a ragtag group take shape, establish priorities, set directions, and achieve success.

When the advising relationship has been productive and trusting, a resounding "thank you" from the group generates an exhilarating

Help advisers be more than ghost signatures

Jeffrey B. Cufaude

"Sign your name on this form and we'll never bother you again," sounds like a sales pitch undergraduates use to lure an unsuspecting professor into "advising" their student organization. Unfortunately it often works, leaving many faculty advisers as little more than ghost signatures. Worse, many student activities programs allow this to occur.

Faculty advisers play a crucial role in organizations that provide students an opportunity for involvement and a sense of community. They also can help campus activities programs bridge the gap between academic affairs and student affairs by strengthening ties with the faculty. Besides, faculty advisers can offset.

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private satisfaction. Students appreciate the adviser's contributions; the public acknowledgment for a job well done yields good feelings not quickly forgotten.

Another special reward of the faculty adviser job is the unexpected visit by former group members who have returned for homecoming, alumni weekends, and class reunions. They will remember you because you were part of the experiential set which bonds faculty and staff members with students.

When the prospective adviser asks, "What do I need to know?" use the opportunity to give something tangible to take away. Develop a brief guide for student organization advisers, which defines an adviser's roles, suggests approaches for developing trust, describes strategies for establishing productive lines of communication, and when appropriate, delineates official obligations the adviser has to the host institution.

Advising presents both a rewarding and trying set of experiences. When consulting with a prospective adviser, be candid about the dimensions of the adviser/student organization relationship, for both the adviser and the organization need to understand the adviser's role. The organization and the adviser also must identify a mechanism which, in a non-adversarial manner, will permit an adviser to relinquish the position or allow the organization to seek a different adviser. For a faculty or staff member to be identified as an adviser on paper but, in fact, to not function as such because of irreconcilable differences is a charade and counterproductive for both parties.

During the last five years, higher education literature increasingly has acknowledged students' cocurricular experiences as significant not only while on campus but later in the postgraduation work place as well. Faculty and staff members who serve as advisers are invaluable. They become role models and enrich students' lives both within the organizational setting and, perhaps more importantly, within the broad collegiate experience. Often in very casual yet meaningful ways, membership in student organizations provides students with long-remembered opportunities to interact with respected scholars and academicians outside the classroom.

We want knowledgeable, well-prepared, and effective advisers. It is our obligation to provide the information and guidance that will enhance the potential for productive, successful, and enjoyable adviser/student relationships.

Mel Klein is director of unions and student activities at the University Park Campus of Pennsylvania State University. He joined the Penn State staff in 1967, expecting to stay only one year while he completed a master's degree program. He earned not only a master's in student personnel administration but also a doctoral degree in higher education.

many problems encountered by student activities professionals: less available time for direct advising, fewer resources for student use, the indirect link between classroom and cocurricular educational experiences.

Do not permit invisible advisers to haunt your campus: Form a faculty adviser program and bring your activities program back to life.

Developing a comprehensive faculty adviser program takes time, resources, and planning. It takes the creative participation of the entire campus activities staff and the commitment of the department head to make the program happen. Do not allow your initial difficulties, however, to overshadow the faculty advisers' lasting benefits for the students.

Where to begin: Recruitment (Is there anyone out there?)

An organization's initial success rests with its ability to recruit quality, committed members. The same holds true when forming a pool of advisers.

Circulating a simple survey to all current faculty and staff often attracts interested individuals, especially new members wanting to become a part of campus life and thus eager to share their free time with a student organization. The interest survey should ask what campus organizations the individual participated in during college, what organizations the individual has advised in previous jobs, what types of organizations the person would be most interested in advising, and if the person is uninterested in advising, would he or she be willing to consult with groups on particular issues or present a workshop.

Although such a survey can result in a healthy pool of potential advisers, it isn't the

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only form of recruitment. If a student group approaches a potential adviser, the personal impact will exceed the impersonality of a departmental survey. Students, however, must clearly communicate the group's and the university's expectations.

At Northern Illinois University, the student government and the campus activities office developed a faculty adviser agreement, which advisers sign during the student organization recognition/registration process.
The NIU adviser agrees to:

1. Meet regularly with the organization's executives to discuss goals, needs, and events.
2. Act as fiscal adviser if the organization receives student association funds. The adviser must ensure that the organization spends its funds within the guidelines of the student association finance committee, monitoring whether expenditures are authorized in the student association's budget allocation.
3. Ensure that the organization files recognition/registration paperwork annually and updates officer cards when needed.
4. Attend organization meetings when appropriate.
5. Work with the organization's executives to guarantee affirmative action recruitment and member selection.
6. Act as a resource, directing members to university departments for assistance.
7. Ensure that the organization's actions conform to the university's established policies and procedures.

The agreement also offers new advisers assistance from the student association and the activities staff. Ongoing education and training can prevent advisers from feeling overwhelmed by the list of expectations. Your support helps balance the challenge posed by the advisers' responsibilities.

Develop a support system and a handbook; sponsor newsletters, workshops, seminars; disseminate articles on advising and student development theory. Before the semester begins, offer a workshop that reviews the faculty adviser's role, addresses university expectations, describes possible resources, outlines policies and procedures, and allows students to communicate their specific needs. Meanwhile, conduct a student officer training workshop and encourage student leaders to discuss their perceptions of the adviser's role. Then bring the two groups together to determine mutual expectations.

Once the year begins, do not ignore the advisers. Propose seminars on fiscal management, officer training and transition, basic programming, advising strategies, budgeting and fund raising, organizational development and group dynamics, university services, adviser liability.

Write a *relevant,* informative resource manual, identifying common needs and concerns, for example, the adviser's responsibilities, university policies and procedures, available resources, negotiating expectations with the organization, basic parliamentary procedure, statement of professional ethics. Be careful, though: Faculty members already plagued by information overload won't use a manual that is bulky or verbose. It must be current, concise, easy to use, and simple to update. Remember, too, to involve key officials from campus departments and student government, student organization leaders, and existing faculty advisers in the development of the manual.

The end-of-the-year reception ... is not adequate by itself; it assumes the adviser will last until year's end.

Recognition

You should recognize everyone who volunteers for your activities program: faculty advisers as well as the student leaders. The end-of-the-year reception, however, is not adequate by itself; it assumes the adviser will last until year's end. To help your advisers make it through the year, develop an ongoing recognition program, which can include:

- Letters from the president or provost acknowledging their importance.
- A reception for advisers and organization presidents at the home of the university president.
- Notes from the activities staff, thanking them for their assistance.
- A newspaper ad listing faculty advisers.
- A faculty adviser appreciation day involving student organization members.
- Letters to the national headquarters of organizations whose advisers have demonstrated commitment to their roles.

Do not permit invisible advisers to haunt your campus

- Letters to the supervisors of faculty members who have contributed time and expertise to student organizations.
- Articles in university publications.
- An outstanding faculty adviser award, with recipients listed on a prominently displayed plaque.
- Free tickets to campus events.
- "Faculty adviser of the month" profiles in the advisers' newsletter.
- Framed certificates of appreciation.
- Phone calls or notes from the activities staff congratulating the adviser when an organization sponsors a successful event.

The road to success

The ideas are not new, the strategies not that inventive—so why aren't there more faculty adviser development programs? Time? Resources? Planning?

There's no time like the present to plan how to use the resources around you. Collaborate with another student affairs department or the student government. Involve others in the planning and implementation of the program:

- Recruit current faculty advisers to write newsletter articles, present brown bag ses sions, or review handbook copy.
- Work with your campus news bureau to write news releases about advisers' accom plishments.
- Use a research class to conduct and analyze an adviser survey.
- Ask a graphics class to design recognition awards and certificates.

Maximize the resources already at your disposal. American poet Eugene Ware wrote, "All glory comes from daring to begin." Invest now in your university's student organizations by planning a faculty adviser development program.

Jeffrey B. Cufaude, greek affairs coordinator at Iowa State University, has presented numerous sessions on training faculty advisers, programming, and communications skills for NACA and the Mid-American Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council associations. He holds a master's degree in communication studies and a bachelor's in English from Northern Illinois University, where he worked as activities adviser for greek affairs and as program coordinator.

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